

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 AID-20 OMB-01 DRC-01 /153 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3921

INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

UNCLAS SAN SALVADOR 3893

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, NU

SUBJ: REACTION TO NICARAGUAN LAW ON "INJURY AND CALUMNY"

REF: STATE 200795

1. THE RECENT REFORM OF THE SECTIONS OF THE NICARAGUAN PENAL CODE DEALING WITH "INJURY AND CALUMNY" HAS BECOME A SMOLDERING, IF NOT BURNING, ISSUE HERE, PROVOKING CONSIDERABLE COMMENT--UNIVERSALLY NEGATIVE--IN THE LOCAL PRESS. DIARIO DE HOY, FOR EXAMPLE, BRANDED THE LAW A "JURIDICAL MONSTROSITY" DESIGNED TO SUPPRESS ALL CRITICISM OF THE GON. SIMILARLY, LA PRENSA GRAFICA TERMED IT A "JURICICAL ATROCITY" AIMED AT STRIKING FEAR IN THE HEARTS OF NICARAGUAN CITIZENS AND JOURNALISTS. NICARAGUAN AMBASSADOR DR. ARMANDO LUNA SILVA ATTEMPTED TO COUNTER NEGATIVE EDITORIAL COMMENT IN A LETTER TO DIARIO DE HOY AND LA PRENSA GRAFICA, BUT BOTH PAPERS REJECTED HIS DEFENSE OF THE NEW LAW IN SUBSEQUENT EDITORIALS.

2. THE EL SALVADOR PRESS CLUB PROTESTED TO THE NICARAGUAN CONGRESS THE "DIRECT ATTACK ON THE PRESS" WHICH IMPERILLED THE "ONLY LIBERTY LEFT IN THAT COUNTRY." THE ASSOCIATION OF
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JOURNALISTS OF EL SALVADOR SENT A MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY TO THEIR NICARAGUAN COLLEAGUES.

3. DR. PEDRO LEONEL MORENO MONJE, GENERAL MANAGER OF EL MUNDO, REPLACED ING. LUIS PALAIS DEBAYLE, EDITOR OF MANAGUA'S NOVEDADES, AS PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL AMERICA JOURNALISTS (APCA). PALAIS RESIGNED FROM HIS POST AND WITHDREW HIS PAPER FROM APCA AFTER THE ASSOCIATION VOTED AT ITS OCTOBER 5 MEETING IN GUATEMALA TO CONDEMN THE NEW LAW. THREE DAYS LATER, EL MUNDO PUBLISHED AN EDITORIAL EXPRESSING THE BELIEF THAT THE GON, IN THE FACE OF THE WIDE-SPREAD PROTESTS, WOULD RETURN TO ITS HISTORIC OBSERVANCE OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION.
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